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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at effective schools research as it relates to classroom managemert in participating schools associated with Michigan's Upper Peninsula Effective Schools Professional Development Program--a staff development program based on effective schools research and designed to bring about school improvement. Effective schools research provides a theoretical foundation for this paper's foci on planning issues and teacher behaviors as they relate to managing school work, developing curriculum, and determining student performance expectations. (JAM)

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CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT:
WHAT DOES RESEARCH TELL US?

Introduction

The Upper Peninsula (U.P.) of Michigan is a truly unique region. Located to the northwest of Michigan's Lower Peninsula, this rural area has a population of only 330,000 people spread over 16,500 miles of farmland and forests. The region is so widespread that for many residents the state capitols of Wisconsin and Minnesota are closer than Lansing, Michigan's capitol.

Educators throughout the region have taken a keen interest in recent years in school improvement efforts. Cooperative endeavors between local districts and Northern Michigan University were a step in the right direction, but without additional support, they could not accomplish most of the major goals that they had envisioned together. Michigan has regional educational service agencies, known as Intermediate School Districts (ISDs), who were also part of the planning process for school improvement. Bolstering these efforts was the Michigan Department of Education.

Eventually, in 1987, plans came together for an Upper Peninsula Center for Educational Development which would be located at Northern Michigan University, in Marquette, Michigan. Support for the center was both philosophical and financial, but there was still need for additional funding to make significant regional progress. Once that formal commitments were in place

between Northern Michigan University (NMU), the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), local districts, and the ISDs, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation made a major commitment to a program designed to improve schools in the region.

The Upper Peninsula Effective Schools Professional Development Program is a staff development program, based on the effective schools research, and designed to bring about school improvement. Funding for the three year program includes $326,000 from the Kellogg Foundation; $75,000 from the Michigan Department of Education, $69,300 from the seven Intermediate School Districts in the region; and, $69,000 from Northern Michigan University.

The program is coordinated by a full time Director at the Center, and functions through a network of Coordinator/Trainers at each of the seven ISDs, and Chairpersons of local planning and coordinating committees at local participating districts. Local and intermediate educators, as well as faculty from the Department of Education at Northern Michigan University are trained during a one year period, at one to five day workshops, in the strategies, activities and practices found in effective schools. They then return to their home districts to train others, and to implement school improvement plans for their respective districts. The program will train approximately forty school effectiveness facilitators in each year of the three year project.

The primary training of the program evolves from effective

schools research. This research has been developing for some twenty years and is based, in large measure, on research conducted by Ron Edmonds, Larry Lezotte, and Wilbur Brookover (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979). These researchers examined schools that were outwardly the same or highly similar in terms of facilities, training and experience of teachers and administrators, availability of materials and supplies, and the background of students. Yet, certain of these "similar" schools stood out above the other schools in terms of learning outcomes for students. The researchers asked the obvious question; why?

It was found that certain correlates, or characteristics, were, and are, found in those schools that are more effective in terms of learning outcomes for students, than their less effective counterparts. The research has been replicated by researchers throughout many schools, literally scattered around the world, and the findings are consistent. Although the precise wording of these characteristics does vary somewhat from one researcher to the next, the essence of their descriptions is quite similar, as follows:

Safe and orderly climate
Opportunity to learn and student time on task
Clear school mission
High expectations
Instructional leadership
Frequent monitoring of student progress
Home school relations

It is beyond the scope, and intent, of this brief paper to examine the full measure of all of the characteristics of effective schools. Nor is it the intent to describe the full

extent of the Upper Peninsula Effective Schools Professional Development Program; instead, this paper will look at effective schools research being provided to schools participating in the project, related to classroom management.

Classroom Organization and Management

Many good articles and books are available dealing with the topic of classroom organization and management. Two are particularly useful, Classroom Management For Secondary Teachers, and Classroom Management For Elementary Teachers, both by Emmer, et. al., (1984), and which may be found in the Reference section of this paper. Much of the following section is taken from those two excellent publications.

For the sake of convenience, many researchers separate many of teachers' activities into organization and management. The former is often conceived of as being those things that a teacher does before students arrive in the classroom. This is described as the planning function carried out by all effective teachers, and which makes the task of management much easier. Some of the more important plans that effective teachers map out before students arrive are as follows (Emmer, et. al., 1984a):

Rules and regulations
Rewards and punishment
Room arrangement
Management of student work
Curriculum

The more one examines the research related to effective schools, the more obvious it becomes that a key ingredient is planning. Teachers who attempt to engage in any facet of the

teaching and learning cycle, without adequate planning, simply are not as effective as those who do plan. As an example, the teacher who develops rules and regulations as problems occur, rather than before the fact, is likely to act out of anger or frustration, rather than from a logical and thoughtful basis. The same is particularly true of punishment; penalties developed "on the spot" are frequently more harsh and severe than need be.

Planning for room arrangement can greatly affect the teacher's ability to manage the classroom. Avoiding congested areas, high traffic areas, hidden spots, and providing places within the classroom for simultaneous but varied activities, should all be considered. Seemingly trivial decisions, such as where to place the teacher's desk, pencil sharpener, and waste basket, can all have an impact on the ability of a teacher to smoothly manage a classroom. A related decision is the physical location of students' desks; should they all face in the same direction; do all seating locations have good line of sight for the chalkboard, overhead transparencies, and other video uses; are there any distractions which students would be looking directly toward. All of these decision should be carefully considered and planned for.

The effective teacher also engages in developing plans for managing student work. Decisions should be made in advance regarding collecting and returning homework, making assignments, initiating student work while taking roll and reporting attendance, and dealing with the student who returns from an

absence and needs past assignments. In addition, effective teachers take their own time constraints into account when making homework assignments, so that they will be able to provide prompt, thorough, corrective, and instructional feedback to students.

Linked closely to planning for the management of student work is the work of planning the curriculum. Provisions should be made for the entire school year, for each semester, for monthly and/or weekly blocks of time, and for daily work. Research is explicit on the point that it is a rare teacher who can effectively teach without planning. Obviously, teachers should expect students to come to class prepared to learn, but conversely, students have a right to expect that their teacher will come to class prepared to teach. Effective preparation for teaching requires that the teacher has a lesson plan that includes each of the following components:

Objectives
Materials
Activities
Measurement

Furthermore, general research in teacher and school effectiveness notes that instructional objectives need to be appropriate for the students' level and that students need to know when they have been successful by receiving positive feedback (Murphy, et. al., 1982).

After students have arrived, whether it is at the beginning of the year or the day, teachers begin to exercise their management skills, based on the planning they did while

organizing for the day, the week, the month, or the year. The start of each class, each day, and particularly the start of the school year, is each of great importance. There are a number of useful guidelines to follow, especially during the first days of the school year (Emmer et. al., 1984a):

Maintain a whole-group focus
Stay in charge of all of the students, all of the time
Keep students involved; avoid deadtime
Plan adequate time to teach classroom procedures and rules
Establish a content focus and positive expectations
Provide variety and a change of pace
Plan activities that provide student success

More specifically, there are specific activities that are particularly appropriate for the first day of the year. The following list is designed for elementary classes, but can be adapted for use in secondary classrooms (Emmer et. al., 1984a):

Teach classroom rules and procedures
Introduce students to important features of the room
Teach class routines, e.g. warm-up and end-of-day routines
Introduce materials and supplies that will be used
Conduct a get-acquainted activity
Do simple academic activities, such as review
Introduce an exciting new topic of study
Play a game students already know, or can easily learn
Do a simple art or craft activity

Teachers who master the ability of getting the school year off to a good start can maintain good management by following a relatively short and simple set of guidelines (Emmer et. al., 1984b):

Actively monitor academic performance and social conduct
Stop inappropriate behavior quickly
Have appropriate consequences for inappropriate behavior
Provide clear directions for all activities
Keep students accountable
Provide feedback for both academic work and social behavior

As the teacher moves along through the school year, an

effectively managed classroom always provides for sustained momentum, and, as the teacher moves from one activity to another, provisions are made for smooth transitions. By doing so, an academic focus can be best maintained, students will remain on task, and most discipline problems can be avoided. Administrators can provide assistance in this area by minimizing interruptions, including the over-utilization of public address systems and by prohibiting unnecessary visitors from stopping at classrooms. Secondary schools are sometimes major offenders of this when candy sales, ring sales, class or club meetings, requests for students to report to the nurse (coach, counselor etc.), and other types of interruptions interfere regularly with the teaching/learning cycle.

An important management technique in the classroom is part of the effective schools research characteristic of having high expectations for all students. By having low expectations, a teacher may unintentionally cause a student to become bored, discouraged, and eventually, a discipline problem. Effective teachers, those who elicit the best learning outcomes from children, are those who hold high expectations.

Today, many teachers work with low achieving, at-risk, and/or low socio-economic-status (SES) students. These populations are especially sensitive to teacher expectations; many have low self esteem and a history of weak academic performance. By having high expectations for them, encouraging them to actively participate in classroom discussions and

activities, and by being generally supportive, these students may become more academically productive--a goal of all effective teachers. This practice can also be considered a management technique since it has the capacity to reduce discipline problems.

Teacher behaviors can "tell" students what a teacher expects from them. Brophy (1979) noted teacher behaviors such as smiling, head nodding, and general interaction between student and teacher. Good (1981) found that teachers often expected certain types of behavior and achievement from individual students. These expectations sometimes caused teachers to behave differently toward different students. These differing behaviors do begin to communicate to students what the teacher expects from them in terms of both academic outcomes and behavior; consequently, levels of aspiration, motivation, and self-concept may all be affected.

Brophy (1979) noted that if treatment of students did not change over time, and if students neither resisted nor changed it in any way, then the treatment could shape student behavior and achievement. Thus, both behavior and achievement would conform to what the teacher had originally expected. This becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Good (1981) noted that teacher behavior toward students could be demonstrated in a variety of ways. Low achieving students may be seated further away from the teacher; teachers may pay less attention to low achievers in academic situations;

teachers may call on low achievers less often than on other students; teachers may give low achievers less time to respond to a question; they may provide fewer cues and ask fewer follow-up questions.

Not too long ago, the author worked with an elementary teacher in the American Southwest who was already an excellent teacher, but who was determined to do more for low SES, minority students in the teacher's classroom. Due to the fact that anonymity was promised, the teacher, school, and district will not be further identified. Without going into a great deal of detail regarding the particular strategies employed, the teacher called on a selected group of low SES, minority children, approximately twice as frequently as others in the classroom. This was done twice a week, for thirty minutes at a time, for one month. When calling on them, the teacher gave cues and clues, gave additional time to respond, and was supportive of their efforts by providing genuine and individualized praise. By the next month, the same students were <u>volunteering</u> to answer questions approximately one and one-half times as frequently as others in the classroom, and were doing so with correct responses at the same rate as all others.

Certainly the "experiment" described above is not something one could refer to as "conclusive evidence"; nonetheless, it does illustrate the point that low SES students can be encouraged to participate more in class discussions. In addition, it should be noted that this was done in a classroom where the teacher was

already an excellent classroom manager, treated all children with a very caring attitude, generated interest and enthusiasm, and practiced discipline that was firm, fair, and consistent. The point it, if this excellent teacher--and the author has had the opportunity to observe scores of teachers in action over the last twenty five years--could elicit a better response rate from students, what might be accomplished by a teacher who was not initially as skilled; that is, by a teacher who chose to become proficient simultaneously in several of the skill areas related to high expectations.

Unfortunately, the author has observed many educators who are not following the principles of effective schools that research has provided in recent years. Certainly, they are not doing so intentionally; rather, they are struggling to do the best that they know how. It is essential that the information about effective schools is made available to a far larger audience and that those in positions of authority exert the educational leadership forces that can put the research into practice.

Summary

The vast majority of teachers would be happy to assist students in achieving higher learning outcomes, but they often do not know how to do so. Unfortunately, teachers practice their work in isolation; educators are not like workers in other professions, such as doctors and lawyers, who regularly have the opportunity to observe others within their respective

professions. A particular teacher may be exercising excellent practices and skills, yet it is common for the teacher next door to be relatively unaware of what is taking place in neighboring classrooms. Our schools (schedules) typically are not designed for teachers to observe one another, nor are teachers frequently encouraged to do so. When comparing education to business and industry, it is obvious that we do not dedicate the financial and human resources to research and development that business and industry do.

The knowledge base exists which provides us with the strategies, activities, and practices that make some schools and some teachers more effective than others, in terms of student learning outcomes. Many colleges of education are just now beginning to infuse that information into their teacher preparation programs; and, how long will it be before a significant number of in-service teachers are replaced by those who do have the requisite knowledge and skills?

If we are going to improve this nation's schools, we must work with the practitioners in the field, provide them with the knowledge base, and assist them in developing the appropriate skills. Michigan's Upper Peninsula is fortunate to have the opportunity to do just so, under the auspices of the UP Effective Schools Professional Development Program. This combining of philosophical and financial support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Northern Michigan University, Michigan Department of Education, and the seven UP intermediate school districts is a

unique collaborative effort. None of the entities involved in the project has both the skills and the finances to carry out this ambitious program. Thanks go to all involved, but especially to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for their generous support of school improvement efforts.

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